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Verum dico quod videtur.
TER.

The solemn truth involves the human race.

THAT man is a weak, frail, and fallible being, there are none, we feel persuaded, who will deny. It must be evident to every observer, however superficial may have been his attention, that the boasted strength of human intellect, when brought to the test of difficulty and arduous exertion, in many cases displays only its weakness, and shrinks with fear from the encounter. We are

all accustomed to inveigh against the fallacy of human understanding, and the insufficiency of human acquirements. Our daily observations continually force upon our minds the conviction, that the intellect of man must bow before certain circumstances; that there are limits to his exertion, and bounds to the dominion of his soul. Though these limits are never the same in different men, yet their existence is too evident, for us ever to remain with the belief that mortal man is anything but a weak & finite being.

We are ever prone to remark every defect in the character of others. We detect, with eagle eye, the faults & the failings of our fellow-creatures. We pour out our censure on all around us; and can

find occasion of invective or reproach in every person we meet. We trace, with nice, & often malignant, discrimination, the outlines of every character. We even point out the more minute shades of temper, of intellect, of acquirement. No man can fail in any enterprise which he has undertaken, without exciting our sarcasms, or at least our remarks upon his conduct.

The objects of our remarks are however, upon the other hand, equally accurate in determining our share of error. They are equally alive to detect our failings, & to pour the torrent of reproach upon whatever they may see amiss in us. Men have little sympathy for each other in this respect; they always perceive each other's weaknesses, & never fail to remark them.

Convinced as we are and must be of the weakness of human intellect, and aware of all the faults and defects of our nature, it is not a little singular, that every one of us evinces by his practice a confidence in his own powers entirely contrary to the general views he has of man. The faults of others are exposed without mercy, and never escape our notice; our own are unperceived by ourselves, and what is worse, we foolishly imagine, that we each possess the fewest faults among our fellow creatures, that we are competent to almost every undertaking, and that the vigor of our intellect, the energies of our mind, the feelings of our heart, will never fail or flag. There is in most men a self-sufficiency, which disgusts them in others, but to which their

mental vision is blinded in themselves. They are ready to exclaim against the unwarranted confidence of those around them, while perhaps at the same moment, they themselves are planning some scheme, and calculating upon its success, in a manner completely to expose them to similar contempt. This propensity extends beyond the common walks of life. The great, the powerful, and the wise, participate in its practice. The warrior that condemns the rashness of another, plunges without consideration into situations of tenfold difficulty. The statesman, whose observing eye has marked the errors of former men of his profession, has seen where they failed, and how they might have surmounted their difficulties, —

strikes often on the very same rocks, and furnishes matter of comment to future statesmen.

If we attempt to convince any man of the weakness and of the multitude of defects in his fellow-mortals, the task will not be difficult if we only confine our remarks to other men, without touching upon his individual character. As long as this course is pursued, he listens with attention, and confesses what may be advanced to be true. But the moment that self is touched, the delicate chord vibrates through his frame. His opinions are changed, and his views & perceptions of things entirely altered. He can form excuses for conduct which before he blamed; & plead palliations for errors which before admitted of none. Self love,

to borrow the expression of Rochefoucauld, is the grossest of all flatterers. It casts a veil over every defect, represents man to himself as almost perfect, and furnishes an excuse for every error of conduct or of mind. To argue with a man whose self-love you have awakened, is but haranguing the tumultuous ocean. Alike deaf to every thing you may adduce, his passions & his propensities rise up in hostile array against all your arguments. He looks upon you as an impertinent intruder; he attributes all your conversation to personal malice, and parts with you convinced that mankind are worse and better, than he had at all imagined them before to be.

It is the highest effort of human magnanimity to be able to

endure without offence reproof and correction; to be aware of the weaknesses of others, from a consciousness of them in ourselves; & to draw from the knowledge of our own imperfections, inferences with regard to our fellow-beings, & hints for our conduct towards those with whom we mingle. A man of such a character will know when & where to bestow reproof; he will look on men & things with more enlarged views & more extended conceptions. Afar & removed from the petulance of small criticism, his voice, when excited to correct, will be without contamination from the pestilent influence of malice & malevolence. The poison of slander will never envenom the arrows of his satire; and the sting that they may inflict, however

deep it may be, will benefit instead of injuring.

Such a man is alone above the world. He looks down on those around him with all the complacency of repose. Convinced of his own fallibility, he plumes not himself upon his acquirements, nor places a vain confidence in his exertions. He mends his own faults by being fully persuaded that he is not more exempt from error than the rest of men; & while his less magnanimous fellow-actors on the changing drama of human life are toiling in unavailing endeavors, and wasting their powers and their energies on things which though above their reach, seem to be within their grasp, to the eye of deluded self-confidence, — he pursues "the noiseless tenor of his way," or, if he does

attempt any thing, calculates on its certainty, and comes out a victor in the undertaking.

If we trace the self-importance, of men, the confidence in their own opinions, and the idea that they entertain of their own superior excellence over others, to their source, we shall find that they all originate in that pride which devolved upon man at his fall. Under a thousand modifications, this principle rules the hearts of men with universal sway. It blinds their eyes to their imperfections. The pride of the demon would ape the majesty of heaven; and the pride of man is often ready to place itself even above competition with any being whatever. From pride springs that selfishness, which would snatch from every fellow-being every bounty

that may be possessed; would arrogate to itself every perfection, and would, were its desires permitted, reign alone joyful, alone delighted.

True as all this is, there is no one but would shudder if he thought the picture was his own. Could he look into his heart, could he open his polluted bosom, & read its secrets, he would find that instead of being overwrought, it falls far short of the reality. He would perhaps be led to throw off the bonds & shackles of pride & self-love. He would, in the horror excited by the view, be led to a higher & a holier frame of mind. He would pray to heaven for a portion of that innocence which was lost by the fall; & look forward with joyful anticipation to the

time, when released from the restraints of finite existence, he shall dwell in one eternal round of harmony & love, amid

"[illegible] sorrow, without darkness light;"

where the pulses of enjoyment affords no space for malevolence, and where the spirit refined & purified aspires to the dignity of seraphic being.

E.